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## Viewing cable 09ATHENS657, Re-Shaping the U.S.-Greece Relationship

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Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

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If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#09ATHENS657**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">09ATHENS657</a>	<a href="#">2009-04-24 12:40</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Athens</a>

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RUEHSQ/AMEMBASSY SKOPJE 0001  
RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ATHENS 000657

SIPDIS  
AMEMBASSY ANKARA PASS TO AMCONSUL ADANA  
AMEMBASSY ASTANA PASS TO USOFFICE ALMATY  
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF  
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL LEIPZIG  
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA  
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG  
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK  
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SUBJECT: Re-Shaping the U.S.-Greece Relationship

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The overwhelming positive attitudes of the Greek public toward the new Administration offers an opportunity to reshape U.S.-Greece bilateral relations, moving Greece from a reluctant to reliable and proactive partner. To achieve this, we need to move the focus of our relationship from the more parochial regional problems to the broader common strategic interests and challenges. We propose a two-stage approach combined with ambitious senior-level engagement. Stage one will focus on resolving -- quickly -- bilateral issues that are high visibility and high value for both sides, including Greek inclusion in the Visa Waiver Program and increased Greek contributions in Afghanistan. In stage two, we will work cooperatively on strategic interests, such as support for Turkey's EU course, counterterrorism and non-proliferation, and Balkan stability. The Macedonia name issue, Aegean tensions, and the Cyprus problem will remain significant, as will the New Democracy government's razor-thin majority (bringing the prospect of early elections). But these hurdles should not block us from achieving our goal of re-defining the bilateral relationship on a more positive and strategic direction. We recommend immediate and visible re-engagement by U.S. policy makers, building on the Secretary's meeting with FM Bakoyannis in February and the President's meeting with PM Karamanlis in April. Our recommendations follow in paragraph 7.

END SUMMARY.

#### OUR GOALS

¶2. (C) The change of administration -- and the historic shift in European public attitudes toward the U.S. -- offers us an opportunity to dramatically reshape the U.S.-Greece relationship. Our goals are:

- To solidify these new attitudes toward the President and translate them into positive engagement with the United States;
- To move Greece from a quiet and reluctant ally to a strong, reliable, and pro-active partner;
- To discourage comparisons with the level of U.S.-Turkish engagement;
- To focus on strategic challenges we have in common (counter-terrorism, Afghanistan, Turkey's EU membership, energy security, economic recovery); and
- To move away from a relationship centered on Aegean disputes, Cyprus, Macedonia - while continuing strong, sustained support for resolution of these issues.

#### A TWO-STAGE APPROACH

¶3. (C) To achieve these goals, we propose a two-stage approach, combined with an ambitious schedule of senior-level engagement to maintain and build on the new momentum. In stage one, we will push for quick resolution of bilateral issues that are high-visibility and high-value and highlight the benefits to both sides of a renewed partnership. These are:

- Visa Waiver Program: We are in the final stages, with a Greek team coming to Washington in early May. The Secretary has expressed her interest in seeing this done expeditiously and the DHS Assistant Secretary supports the goal of concluding by mid-summer. Removing this visa requirement would have a far-reaching impact on Greeks and public attitudes toward the U.S.
- U.S.-EU Extradition and Mutual Legal Assistance Agreements: We are close to resolving minor inconsistencies in interpretations of Treaty language and should be in a position to move this through Parliament by early summer. This would send a strong signal of Greece's willingness to improve cooperation and remove an impediment to EU ratification prior to the next US-EU Summit.
- Afghanistan Contributions: Greek MOD officials have committed to increasing contributions to Alliance efforts in Afghanistan and Hellenic Aid has made it their second-highest priority. This is a tangible and significant turn-around, given the generally weak public support for NATO operations.

¶4. (C) In stage two, we should look to other important areas where Greece can be a productive partner. These include the following priorities:

-- Support for Turkey's EU perspective: Turkey's EU perspective is

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key to both regional stability and our outreach to the Muslim world. Greece is a major supporter of Turkey's EU accession aspirations. We need to work closely with Greece to keep the EU door open.

-- Counterterrorism and non-proliferation: Greece is being buffeted by a resurgence of domestic terrorism and is the leading entry point into the EU for migrants from the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan - raising its role in combating international terrorism. With one-sixth of the world's merchant shipping Greek-owned, and Greek military ships involved in EU and NATO operations, Greece can also play an important role in countering proliferation. We should increase our counter-terrorism assistance cooperation and make a new push on getting Greek ship owners to support the Proliferation Security Initiative.

-- Support for Balkans stability: Greece is one of the largest investors in the Balkans and it is vital that they continue their engagement to ensure that the economic downturn does not jeopardize stability. With its Orthodox ties, Greece also can be helpful in keeping Serbia on the right track, as well as encouraging stability in Kosovo and Bosnia's minorities.

-- Effective OSCE: Greece holds the OSCE Chairmanship this year. This gives us an opportunity to ensure that the Georgia mission is re-established, Russia's security architecture proposal is handled appropriately, and OSCE continues to support the election process in Afghanistan.

15. (C) There are also other areas where we can increase our cooperation. Military cooperation, if done quietly, has always been met by positive attitudes in the Greek military. Good relations with Russia make Greece a useful partner as we re-calibrate that relationship. Greece's contacts in the Middle East can reinforce our messages to Syria and Iran. And Greece already recognizes our emphasis on global issues -- energy, the environment, anti-trafficking initiatives -- that affect it most directly.

#### THE CHALLENGES

16. (C) As we move forward, we will face several major challenges:

-- We must continue to press the GOG to engage in the UN-led process to resolve the Macedonia name issue, realizing that it may not be possible to resolve in the near term. We should encourage them not to use the name issue to slow progress in other areas of cooperation.

-- We will also need to work with Greece to keep Aegean tensions with Turkey in check and encourage practical measures to reduce the number and magnitude of incidents.

-- On Cyprus, we need to encourage Greek support for a resolution, while ensuring the U.S. does not get pulled into the center of this long-standing dispute.

-- The New Democracy government of Karamanlis has a razor-thin majority of one vote in the parliament. We do not expect elections before next spring, at the earliest. We should assume the current government is our partner for this strategy, while keeping strong links to the opposition party led by George Papandreou.

#### HIGH-LEVEL ENGAGEMENT

17. (C) Achieving these goals and re-setting our relationship requires immediate and visible re-engagement by policy-makers. FM Bakoyiannis met with the Secretary in February, and President Obama met with PM Karamanlis in April. We need to build on these early contacts and use meetings with U.S. officials to achieve progress on specific issues. For that reason, we recommend the following engagement strategy:

-- Prime Minister Karamanlis: A Karamanlis visit to Washington any time this calendar year will result in an excellent boost to U.S.-Greek relations. The key to keeping the political benefit from this month's invitation is to make it real by setting a date. Good timing would be this fall in advance of the EU Summit in

December, where Turkey's EU prospects will be discussed.

-- POTUS: Following Karamanlis's invitation in Strasbourg, a POTUS visit to Greece next spring would be a powerful signal that -- having broken the tradition of tying visits to Greece to visits to Turkey -- Greece is an important partner in its own right in

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pursuit of our highest objectives.

-- Vice President: A visit to Greece at any point would be a great boost to U.S.-Greek relations, with the Vice President viewed very favorably by Greeks. A visit, however, would need to be managed in such a way as to not be perceived as a substitute for a Presidential visit at some point, drawing comparisons to the treatment given to Turkey.

-- Secretary of State: FM Bakoyiannis has proposed an informal OSCE ministerial to discuss Russia's security architecture initiative. She has suggested dates at the end of June. Ideally, VWP negotiations would be completed and an announcement made in the run-up to the visit.

-- Secretary of Defense: SecDef will meet with MoD Meimarakis on April 27. The meeting is essential for discussion of Afghanistan contributions, Greece's expected large defense procurement, non-proliferation issues, and other cooperation.

-- Assistant Secretary Designee Gordon: If confirmed by the Senate, an early visit to Athens in May or June (preferably before he stops in Ankara) would be an important opportunity to confirm Mr. Gordon's interest in relations with Greece, and could be used to prepare the ground for the Secretary's participation in the OSCE informal ministerial.

-- Special Envoy Mitchell: A stopover in Athens on a trip to the Middle East would send an important signal to Greece of our willingness to engage them on issues beyond traditional, parochial ones. Greece is generally viewed positively by Palestinians and Israelis; FM Bakoyiannis has been a strong supporter of programs for youth and women in the region and is the host for on-going Track Two discussions.

-- Foreign Minister: We should suggest a visit by FM Bakoyiannis to Afghanistan, in her role as OSCE CIO, in the context of the August elections. We could consider coordinating a visit by her with a visit by U.S. officials (such as Special Envoy Holbrooke or the CENTCOM Commander).

-- Working Groups: In her February meeting with Foreign Minister Bakoyiannis, the Secretary talked about working groups as a way to reinvigorate the relationship. We should upgrade existing groups by raising attendance to a higher level and adding a strategic focus to the discussion (HLCC chaired by Defense and CCC chaired by State), as well as adding a new group to engage on the foreign political and external relations component to our agenda.

18. (C) CONCLUSION: The opportunity to reshape fundamentally the U.S.-Greek relationship should not be missed. The Greek government has already shown in the first few months of the new Administration its desire for a more substantive partnership -- providing needed assistance in Afghanistan, pushing forward previously delayed agreements, and toning down the volume on the Greek-Russian relationship. The U.S. has a strategic interest in cultivating this new attitude and building an enduring alliance on our mutual interests, shared challenges, and common values.

SPECKHARD